

Kindly Do Not Ignore User-generated Content (UGC)

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By Rahul Guhathakurta



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As digital advertising spend has increased globally, the whole market is itself getting crowded day-by-day. To cut through the clutter, the *user-generated content (UGC)* is the best possible way for a brand to grow organically by increasing its reach and engagement across multiple platforms. In a nutshell, it is all about creating a meaningful connection between a brand and its followers.

Typically, an UGC is a mixture of pictures, videos, blogs or testimonials created by unpaid contributors, mostly the ones who are the customers of a particular brand. It directly brings in the *authenticity factor* to the brand, boosts its *social presence digitally* and enhances the *Search Engine Results Pages (SERP)* values.

But, one can actually capitalize by integrating UGC with multi-channel/cross-platforms through a paid ecosystem. In layman terms, this means gathering valuable user content on platforms like Instagram by encouraging followers to share photos of themselves with one of

your brand's products and a corresponding custom hashtag to match and share it to Facebook via Facebook Creator app. And, in turn, users get paid for it. One such example is **WeAre8**, a New York-based digital marketing startup, involved in paid UGC ecosystem.

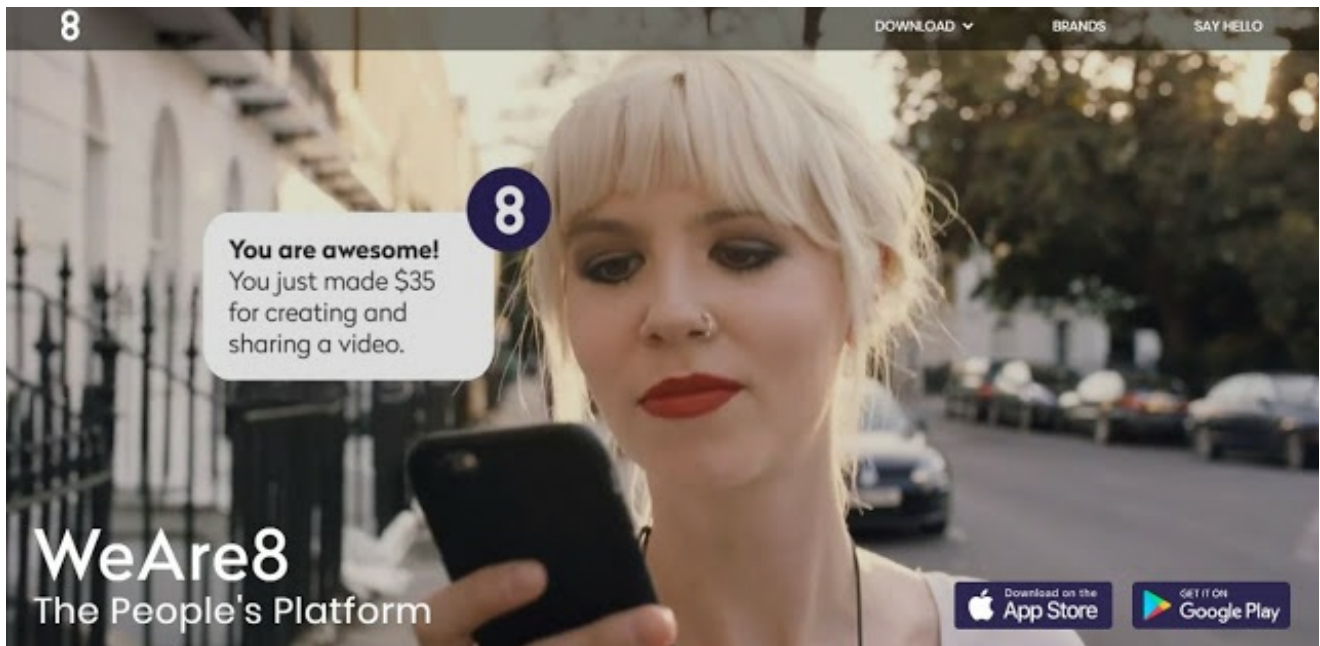


Image Attribute: WeAre8 Official Website's Screenshot

So, now comes the most critical question, how do you encourage UGC?

- Find Out Where Your Customers Are.
- Build an Engaged Audience Ecosystem driven by Influencers.
- Offer Incentives (*Both, Implicit and Explicit*)
- Use Hashtags and Brand Mentions.
- Ask Customers to Model (*and, pay them via PayPal*).
- Ask People to Guest Post (*and, pay them via PayPal*).
- Ask Questions, Answer Questions.
- Create Contests.
- Ask for Comments on Blog Posts, Social Media Pages, and Local Knowledge Graphs.
- Re-post and Promote Customer Reviews.

Points to keep in mind:

1. It is critically important to have a crystal clear objective before attempting to become part of the UGC. For example, brands may ask users to post their reviews directly to their Facebook page or Google My Business or Yelp. Just one disgruntled user's comment or a post could be disastrous which can easily steers/influence people away from a brand's offerings. This directly affects a brand's *customer life cycle (CLC)* - from discovery to purchase, and later the engagement part of it.

2. Secondly, a brand needs to tackle the availability of quality content (*via UGC*) very smartly. Constant feeding to its content pipeline without compromising its brand guidelines will be a challenging aspect of UGC.

3. Thirdly, collaboration with an influencer or a group of influencers should be in the form of well-drafted contract. It should explicitly include a brand's expectations, deliverables, and copyright clauses.

4. Fourthly, do not try to pass an agency execution as a UGC campaign. It will defeat the very purpose of being in this ecosystem in the first place. And, eventually, a brand will end up into the higher end of the spending spectrum.

5. At last, but not the least - a brand engaging through UGC - ought to think like a "*publisher/media publisher*" with a strong editorial processes deployed at its end. And, this role, in particular, should not be confused with the brand manager's role in the organization.

About the Author:

Rahul Guhathakurta (ORCID: 0000-0002-6400-6423) is the founder of IndraStra Global, a strategic analysis, and information services provider.

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